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## NOTES ON FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

1. THE study of the Report of the Committee of Twelve of the Modern Language Association of America (republished by Heath & Co.) is recommended as the best contribution to the teaching of modern languages in this country.

2. The study of a foreign language ought to begin in childhood. In childhood the organs of speech are still in a plastic condition. Good habits are easily formed; bad habits more easily corrected. The fixation of speech habits in the mother-tongue, taking place in the later period of youth, makes it increasingly difficult to acquire even a moderately good pronunciation, and perfection is usually out of the question.

In childhood the mind acts more naively, and the memory is tenacious of whatever interests. Forms of expression, idioms, are readily mastered as single facts. Later in life, in proportion as the mind grows stronger, it also grows more rigid. Then the habit of analyzing and reasoning interferes more or less with the natural receptivity of the student.

3. It is doubtful whether a foreign language should be taken up in the primary grades, unless the beginner has the prospect and intention of continuing it through the secondary school. For what can be acquired of a foreign language in the primary grades, even under the most favorable conditions, is only a foundation. And while it is true that children learn quickly and easily the rudiments of conversation in a foreign tongue, it is also true that they forget them no less quickly and easily.

4. It is not advisable that a child study two foreign languages in a lower grade. Let it be optional whether the one foreign language be French, German, or Latin.

5. It cannot be doubted that pupils in a three- or four-years' course of secondary schools can learn the foreign language well enough to speak and write it with tolerable accuracy. How

much of this can be accomplished within the elementary school has yet to be ascertained. The study of this problem ought, therefore, to appeal to schools interested in educational questions.

6. Incidentally these schools would provide valuable opportunities for observation for the future language teachers studying at the University, as do public schools for some of the state universities. And the best methods worked out in their classrooms would thus speedily reach a large audience.

7. The teaching of foreign languages in the primary grades should be done by teachers who handle the language easily and idiomatically. The grammar method pure and simple would here not be in order. The general aim should rather be to familiarize the learner with the vocabulary and phraseology of the spoken idiom, and to teach him to express himself readily and correctly in easy sentences. The free use of objects and pictures is to be recommended. Classes should be as small as possible, and there should be an exercise on every school day. Infrequent lessons in large classes amount to nothing.

8. The introduction of the study of modern languages into the school curriculum, especially of this country, is comparatively new. Owing to this, the results attained are often unsatisfactory. This lack of success ought not to discredit the educational value of the subject in question.

9. Efficient teachers are rarer in modern languages than in other branches. Causes for this: more expensive preparation owing to the stay abroad, lack of training facilities, the remuneration smaller.

10. The vacillation between the worn-out grammar method and the so-called natural method, the other extreme, ought to give way to a systematic endeavor to discover the best way of presenting the new subject. The Teachers College of Columbia University, New York, called a teacher of the Berlin public schools to introduce their method of modern language teaching to American audiences by lectures and practice lessons. The Germanic Department of the University will ask Dr. Bahlsten to lecture here in June of next year.

11. The teacher of modern languages is hampered in his

class-room work by the lack of that ideal text-book that keeps to the golden mean between the old-fashioned grammar and the innumerable conversational methods.

12. It is pretty safe to assert that the average young boy or girl takes more kindly to French or German than to Latin. The modern language is easier and more interesting. It seems more real and practical. Progress is more rapid. The value of Latin has to be taken on trust; that of the modern language is more obvious to the juvenile mind. For children of twelve the Latin grammar is a very severe study. It means usually for many months little more than the loading of the memory with paradigms, a blind investment of labor for the sake of a mysterious future profit which the learner cannot comprehend. The elementary reading matter is usually dull stuff, devised to illustrate grammar. Up through Cæsar's *Commentaries* there is almost nothing to touch the feeling, to feed the imagination, or to suggest a real connection with the pupil's own life. It is all grind, though in the proper time and place a very useful one. But the question is whether for children of twelve it is not best to break the force of the initial impact with Latin by using a modern language as a buffer.

13. The mastery of a modern language is the best means of acquiring a full appreciation of the classical languages (a statement of special interest because made by a member of the Greek Department).

14. A child's wrestling with another language does not mean a delaying of the development of the child's intellect. Logical thinking is inseparable from expression in a foreign tongue. This leads to the discussion of the disciplinary value of linguistic and literary study, and the well-known reasons for the study of foreign languages in general.

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